

VZCZCXRO4195

PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBW RUEHDA RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA
RUEHLM RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHNC #0252/01 1121439

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 211439Z APR 08 ZDS

FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8721
INFO RUEHZN/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1113
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NICOSIA 000252

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CORRECTED CLASSIFICATION)

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL CY

SUBJECT: COMPOSITION OF WORKING GROUPS SPURS OPTIMISM

NICOSIA 00000252 001.4 OF 002

(U) Sensitive but unclassified - Please protect accordingly

¶1. (SBU) Summary: President Demetris Christofias's appointment of well-known supporters of the 2004 Annan Plan to the working groups and technical committees soon to begin pre-negotiations preparations has pleased reunification activists but divided Cypriot political parties. Pro-government AKEL and opposition DISY praised the staffing, but AKEL's partners in the government, DIKO and EDEK, fear that the appointment of so many YES voters suggests that Greek Cypriots might not "put up adequate resistance" in the talks. The government has responded that appointees will follow Christofias's policies, not their own, muting most objections. The list of committee/working group heads includes noteworthy politicians, diplomats, academics and technocrats, and is bereft of hard-liners and nationalist ideologues. Post will forward and analyze Turkish Cypriot appointments septel. End Summary.

Parties Split Over Appointments

¶2. (SBU) The official announcement of the names of the Greek Cypriot heads of working groups and technical committees drew mixed comments from the Greek Cypriot political establishment but met with the approval of reunification activists. The two major parties, AKEL and DISY, reacted positively while DIKO and EDEK criticized the inclusion of supporters of the Annan Plan, the last (2004) major UN effort to reunify the island. Indeed, most of the politicians chosen to head the committees had actively supported the Plan and are known for their moderate views, despite some having served in former Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos's administration.

¶3. (SBU) The negative reaction of DIKO and EDEK marked their first public disagreement with Christofias's handling of the Cyprus issue. DIKO leader Marios Karoyian cautioned that the appointment of politicians who supported the YES vote would send the wrong messages abroad. In a similar statement, EDEK Vice President Marinos Sizopoulos said YES supporters "may not have what it takes to resist the pressure" for unacceptable compromises. In a low-key response, Government Spokesman Stefanos Stefanou said that committee heads and members will not follow a personal policy, but the policy of President Christofias. Opposition DISY, which generally supports the President on CyProb-related matters, asserted that the committees should be judged from the work they will produce, not from their composition.

Working Group Heads

¶4. (SBU) The list of working group and technical committee heads is an impressive array of individuals with extensive experience on the issues they have been tasked to discuss with their Turkish Cypriot colleagues. It includes a past president, five former cabinet ministers, diplomats, academics and high level government officials.

¶5. (SBU) European Matters: George Vassiliou, former ROC President (1989-1993), former negotiator for Cyprus' EU accession and former leader of the United Democrats Party. He is a successful economist/businessman turned politician known for his flexible, moderate and forward looking approach to efforts for a settlement. Vassiliou is a close and regular Embassy contact, and his wife is Cyprus's new European Commissioner (Health).

¶6. (SBU) Governance and Power Sharing: Andreas Mavrommatis, former Labor Minister, Government Spokesman, diplomat and interlocutor of the Greek Cypriot side in the intercommunal talks of 1983-84. During his watch as interlocutor, the two sides made significant progress, resulting in a draft agreement which was eventually rejected by then-President Spyros Kyprianou. Mavrommatis in 1999 was appointed as Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Iraq. He also chaired the UN Committee Against Torture's inquiry on United States practices in 2006.

¶7. (SBU) Security and Guarantees: Sotos Zackheos, a career diplomat, served as Ambassador to China, Permanent Representative to the UN in New York and Geneva and Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2003-2006). Zackheos enjoys President Christofias's confidence, and is remembered within the Embassy as a particularly "challenging" interlocutor. He remains a regular contact.

¶8. (SBU) Territory: Alecos Shambos, another career diplomat, served as Ambassador to Egypt and Kenya and Permanent Representative to the UN in New York in 1993-1995. Prior to his retirement in 1998, he served as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Hard working and principled, he is known as a person with moderate views on the Cyprus issue.

¶9. (SBU) Property: Erato Marcoullis, former Ambassador to the U.S., Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the

NICOSIA 00000252 002.3 OF 002

(U) Sensitive but unclassified

first woman Foreign Minister (July 2007 - February 2008.) Though she was always viewed as moderate and pro-solution, she disappointed many reunification activists when she accepted Tassos Papadopoulos's call to head the MFA. There, she faithfully implemented his hard-line Cyprus Problem policies.

¶10. (SBU) Economic Matters: Michalis Sarris, Finance Minister (2005-2008) and former senior World Bank official. Sarris is considered one of the best economists on the island and perhaps the best-performing minister in Papadopoulos's cabinet, having delivered high growth, low inflation, and a seamless transition to the Euro in January 2008. Embassy officials regularly see him.

Technical Committees:

¶11. (SBU) Crime and Criminal Matters: Andros Kapardis, criminologist, professor of legal psychology at the University of Cyprus.

-- Economic and Commercial Matters: Dionysis Mavronicolas, senior civil servant.

-- Cultural Heritage: Takis Hadjidakis, former EU accession coordinator in Papadopoulos's administration. A visible and active YES voter, Hadjidakis resigned in 2004 following Papadopoulos's successful campaign against the settlement plan.

-- Crisis Management: Marios Lyssiotis, career diplomat seconded to the Presidential Palace.

-- Humanitarian Matters: Symeon Matsis, former Permanent Secretary of different ministries and an outspoken supporter of the Annan Plan.

-- Health Matters: Haris Charalambous, former Health Minister (2006-2007) and longtime member of AKEL.

-- Environment: Costas Kadis, academic and researcher specializing in environmental issues; also served as Papadopoulos's last Health Minister (2007-2008).

Comment

¶12. (SBU) Christofias's decision to appoint politicians who were in the front lines of the YES camp seems intended to send the message to both Cypriot communities and the international community that he wants both progress at the talks and an improved climate on the island. The reaction of DIKO and EDEK is a taste of what lies ahead as the talks progress, but DISY's backing, along with AKEL's solid support, should enable Christofias to continue to pursue his policies without too much political cost.